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ABSTRACT

In the past two years, Midland College in Texas has lost several of its most qualified vocational instructors to business and industries offering a much higher salary. In an effort to deal with this stiff competition, the college held a meeting with approximately 200 local business owners and managers to outline the college's problems and suggest several solutions. First, the college staff pointed out to the business leaders that if instructors were allowed to continue teaching, they could turn out many more qualified employees to fill vacancies in the local work force and that the gap between faculty salaries and community pay scales was widening so quickly that even the most dedicated faculty were finding it hard to resist the financial incentives offered. At this and subsequent meetings, the college staff outlined three possible solutions: (1) businesses could underwrite the cost of salary supplements for highly skilled instructors to make their pay schedule competitive; (2) industries employing highly trained personnel could arrange for one of their employees to teach on a part-time basis, with the instructor's salary being paid by the company; and (3) the school could eliminate vocational and technical programs for which no qualified instructors could be found. While some businesses have been receptive to these suggestions, a critical need remains to recruit and retain highly skilled, highly motivated technical instructors. (AYC)

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COMPETING WITH INDUSTRY FOR FACULTY MEMBERS.

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"HOW ARE WE GOING TO FILL ALL THOSE FACULTY VACANCIES IN OUR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL COURSES NEXT YEAR?"

THAT'S THE QUESTION BEING ASKED IN YOUR COLLEGE BOARD MEETINGS MORE AND MORE OFTEN THESE DAYS. THE ANSWERS AREN'T GOING TO COME EASILY FOR ANY OF US.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES TODAY, MORE THAN EVER, ARE FACING STIFF COMPETITION FOR THEIR SKILLED VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTORS AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, FOR THEIR SKILLED ACADEMIC INSTRUCTORS FROM INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS IN YOUR AREA.

LET ME CITE YOU A FEW EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED THE PAST TWO YEARS IN OUR INSTITUTION IN ATTEMPTING TO RETAIN OR RECRUIT QUALIFIED PERSONNEL.

LAST FALL, WE LOST OUR BEST WELDING INSTRUCTOR, WHO HAD BEEN WITH US FOR SEVEN YEARS AND HELD A BACHELOR'S DEGREE. HE WENT TO WORK AS AN INDEPENDENT WELDING CONTRACTOR BUILDING OIL WELL DRILLING RIGS FOR ABOUT \$1,500 PER WEEK... A GROSS INCOME OF MORE THAN \$70,000 A YEAR...AND WAS GUARANTEED AT LEAST THREE YEARS' WORK.

OUR COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTOR WORKED PART-TIME LAST SUMMER FOR A LARGE FIRM IN OUR COMMUNITY. WHEN THEY DISCOVERED HOW GOOD HE WAS, THEY OFFERED HIM A SALARY ABOUT 50 PER CENT LARGER THAN HE WAS RECEIVING FROM US...AND HE TURNED IT DOWN. THEY KEPT INCREASING THE OFFER UNTIL IT WAS DOUBLE HIS TEACHING SALARY AND HE TENDERED HIS RESIGNATION ONE WEEK BEFORE FALL REGISTRATION BEGAN AND ASKED TO BE RELIEVED AT THE END OF THE FIRST SEMESTER...WHICH IS MUCH MORE CONSIDERATE THAN MANY PEOPLE WOULD HAVE BEEN.

OUR ELECTRONICS INSTRUCTOR LEFT US FOR A \$60,000 A YEAR POSITION IN INDUSTRY.

THE LIST GOES ON AND ON. WE HAVE HAD A TEACHING VACANCY IN OUR PETROLEUM TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS...WITH NOT A SINGLE APPLICANT. OUR CENTRAL BUSINESS OFFICE HAS LOST THREE ACCOUNTANTS TO LOCAL FIRMS IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, YET THE ACCOUNTING FIRM WHICH DOES OUR COLLEGE AUDIT TOLD US THEY WOULD HAVE TO RAISE THE AMOUNT THEY CHARGE FOR THE AUDIT BECAUSE, AND I QUOTE, "WE HAVE TO COMPETE WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR OUR ACCOUNTANTS AND HAVE HAD TO RAISE THEIR SALARIES TO GET THEM OR TO KEEP THEM!!" I POINTED OUT THAT THESE SAME FIRMS WERE HIRING OUR FACULTY AND STAFF PEOPLE ONE AFTER ANOTHER, AND THAT WE ALSO WERE HAVING TO COMPETE IN THE OPEN MARKET FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL.

OUR BOARD HAS BEEN AWARE OF THIS PROBLEM FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND HAS WRESTLED WITH POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AGAIN AND AGAIN.

LAST FALL WE FINALLY WENT PUBLIC WITH THE PROBLEM. AT A MEETING WITH ABOUT 200 LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS, WE OUTLINED WHAT WE WERE FACING AND SUGGESTED SEVERAL POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

FIRST, WE INDICATED THAT WE WERE FLATTERED THAT THEY FELT SO HIGHLY ABOUT THE QUALITY OF OUR INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF AND DIDN'T WANT TO BAR THEM FROM RECRUITING OUR FACULTY MEMBERS.

BUT WE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THESE SAME INSTRUCTORS, IF ALLOWED TO CONTINUE THEIR TEACHING, COULD TURN OUT MANY MORE QUALIFIED EMPLOYEES TO FILL THE MANY VACANCIES AMONG THE LOCAL WORK FORCE. WE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE GROWING DISPARITY BETWEEN FACULTY SALARIES AND THE COMMUNITY PAY SCALE WAS WIDENING VERY QUICKLY, SO THAT EVEN OUR MOST DEDICATED FACULTY MEMBERS WERE FINDING IT HARD TO RESIST THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES BEING OFFERED. FREE PARKING AND THREE WEEKS OFF AT CHRISTMAS WON'T ALWAYS COMPENSATE FOR AN INCOME HALF AS LARGE AS OTHERS IN THE SAME FIELD ARE MAKING.

AT THAT MEETING, AND SEVERAL SUBSEQUENT PUBLIC MEETINGS, WE OUTLINED THREE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

FIRST WAS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SUPPLY-AND-DEMAND NECESSITATED THAT SALARIES FOR SOME TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTORS WOULD HAVE TO BE INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY ABOVE OUR STANDARD PAY SCHEDULE, EITHER TO RECRUIT OR TO RETAIN THESE PEOPLE. AT EARLIER FACULTY MEETINGS, WE HAD DISCUSSED THIS FULLY WITH OUR INSTRUCTORS AND HAD OBTAINED AT LEAST THEIR GRUDGING ASSENT. WE REALIZE THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY THAT A GOVERNMENT OR HISTORY TEACHER, FOR INSTANCE, WITH A PH.D. AND 15 YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE SHOULD NOT BE COMMANDING A LARGER SALARY THAN A CERTIFIED MACHINE SHOP INSTRUCTOR WITH THE SAME AMOUNT OF INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE AND LESS THAN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE.

OUR SUGGESTION TO THOSE BUSINESS LEADERS WAS THAT, SINCE THEY ARE THE ONES WHO ARE BENEFITTING MOST DIRECTLY FROM THE GRADUATES OF OUR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL PROGRAMS, THEY SHOULD UNDERWRITE THE COST OF SALARY SUPPLEMENTS FOR THESE HIGHLY-SKILLED INSTRUCTORS. THE OIL COMPANIES IN OUR AREA ALREADY HAD BEEN DOING THIS IN ORDER FOR US TO BE ABLE TO ATTRACT AND KEEP A QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR IN THE PETROLEUM TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT. WE ALSO HAD BEEN ALLOWING MAXIMUM CREDIT FOR OUTSIDE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE WHEN WE HIRED NEW TECHNICAL PEOPLE AND PLACED THEM ON OUR SALARY SCHEDULES.

I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT THOSE BUSINESS LEADERS, IN MANY INSTANCES, SAW THE WISDOM OF OUR SUGGESTION AND ARE MAKING SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COLLEGE TO SUPPLEMENT THOSE INSTRUCTORS' SALARIES. IT SIMPLY MAKES GOOD SENSE FOR THEM TO KEEP ONE GOOD INSTRUCTOR IN THE CLASSROOM AND EMPLOY THAT INSTRUCTOR'S PRODUCTS AS THEY COMPLETE THEIR TRAINING. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT A ROAST GOOSE DINNER AT CHRISTMAS MIGHT COST THEM GOLDING EGGS THE REST OF THE YEAR...AND FOR YEARS TO COME.

THE SECOND ANSWER WE SUGGESTED WAS FOR THE INDUSTRIES EMPLOYING HIGHLY-TRAINED PERSONNEL TO PROVIDE OUR INSTITUTION WITH ONE OF THEIR EMPLOYEES TO TEACH FOR US ON A PART-TIME BASIS, WITH THE INSTRUCTOR'S SALARY BEING PAID BY THE COMPANY. WE, LIKE MANY OF YOU, ALREADY ARE RECRUITING A LARGE NUMBER OF QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS ON A PART-TIME BASIS FROM LOCAL FIRMS, USUALLY TO TEACH NIGHT COURSES.

AGAIN, THOSE BUSINESS LEADERS UNDERSTOOD THE RATIONALE OF RELEASING ONE GOOD EMPLOYEE, AND LOSING HIS PRODUCTIVITY, IN ORDER TO HAVE A LONG-RANGE INCREASE IN PRODUCTION A FEW MONTHS LATER WITH THE AVAILABILITY OF MORE TRAINED ENTRY-LEVEL WORKERS.

THIS APPROACH ALREADY IS WORKING FOR US AND WE EXPECT TO HAVE EVEN MORE INDUSTRIES COOPERATING WITH US ON RELEASE-TIME FOR THEIR BEST TECHNICIANS IN THE COMING YEAR.

OUR THIRD PROPOSAL TO THOSE BUSINESS LEADERS WASN'T A SOLUTION...BUT IT WAS AN ALTERNATIVE THAT BOTH WE, AND THEY, MUST FACE UP TO IN THIS COMPETITIVE SITUATION. THAT IS, VERY SIMPLY, TO KILL THOSE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL PROGRAMS FOR WHICH WE ARE NOT ABLE TO FIND QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS.

AT OUR COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND AT YOURS, WE ABSOLUTELY CAN'T AFFORD TO PROVIDE LESS THAN FIRST-RATE INSTRUCTION FOR OUR STUDENTS. WHEN A YOUNG MAN OR YOUNG WOMAN COMES TO OUR INSTITUTION FOR AN EDUCATION...WHETHER IT BE IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES OR AUTO MECHANICS...WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE THAT PERSON WITH THE VERY BEST INSTRUCTION AVAILABLE. ANYTHING ELSE IS A DIS-SERVICE TO THE STUDENT, TO THE COMMUNITY, TO BUSINESS, AND TO THE NATION.

FOR YEARS, WE HAVE FOUGHT TO OVERCOME THE IMAGE THAT A TWO-YEAR COLLEGE WAS SECOND-RATE AND PROVIDED SECOND-RATE INSTRUCTION FOR THOSE STUDENT WHO WEREN'T CAPABLE OF ATTENDING A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY. AND, THANKS TO ALL OF YOU, WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN TRANSFORMING THIS IMAGE INTO A VERY POSITIVE

PICTURE OF EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR BOTH THE TRADITIONAL AND THE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT. GOOD TEACHERS, IN THE ACADEMIC FIELDS, NOW SEEK TO BECOME FACULTY MEMBERS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES BECAUSE THEY WANT, ABOVE ALL, TO TEACH AND TO WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH THEIR STUDENTS. THEY FIND THEIR CAREERS ARE MORE REWARDING AT OUR INSTITUTIONS.

WE HAVE ALWAYS HAD SOME DIFFICULTY IN FINDING THOSE TOP-NOTCH INSTRUCTORS FOR OUR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL COURSES. THESE INSTRUCTORS NOT ONLY MUST EXCELL IN DIFFICULT TECHNICAL AREAS, BUT ALSO MUST WANT TO TEACH AND HAVE THAT RARE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE THEIR SKILLS TO OTHERS.

INFLATION IS AN ENEMY THAT ALL OF US HAVE IN COMMON AND ALL OF US ARE DOING BATTLE WITH IT EVERY DAY. BUT IF WE ALLOW INFLATION TO ROB US OF OUR BEST FACULTY MEMBERS BECAUSE OF COMPETITION FROM INDUSTRY, WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FULFILL THE ROLE OF COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY EDUCATION THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO US.

AND LET ME WARN YOU THAT THIS COMPETITION FOR OUR FACULTY MEMBERS DOESN'T STOP OUTSIDE OUR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL BUILDINGS. IT'S REACHING TOWARD OUR OTHER SKILLED PERSONNEL...THOSE IN MATH, IN SCIENCE, IN ECONOMICS, IN BUSINESS...THE EMPLOYEES IN YOUR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES...EVEN YOUR CUSTODIANS, YOUR FOOD SERVICE AND BOOK STORE EMPLOYEES.

THE SKILLS YOU DEMAND OF YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE ALSO IN DEMAND BY BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE COMPETITION FOR THESE PEOPLE IS GETTING GREATER ALL THE TIME AND WE MUST FACE ALL THOSE OVERTURES TOWARD OUR PERSONNEL.

BUT THE CRITICAL NEED FOR ALL OF US TODAY IS WITH THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF THOSE HIGHLY-MOTIVATED, HIGHLY-SKILLED TECHNICAL INSTRUCTORS WHO ARE BEING COURTED, AND WON AWAY FROM US EACH DAY. WITHOUT THEM, WE LOSE MUCH OF OUR REASON FOR BEING.

IN OUR COMMUNITY, AND IN YOURS, WE MUST FACE THIS PROBLEM AND DEVISE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO IT. IF WE ARE, INDEED, EDUCATORS AND MANAGERS IN OUR ROLES AS COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES AND PRESIDENTS, WE CERTAINLY SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND THE INTELLIGENCE, THE LEADERSHIP, THE UNIQUE SOLUTIONS TO THOSE "OPPORTUNITIES" THAT AWAIT US WHEN WE RETURN TO OUR RESPECTIVE CAMPUSES AND ONCE AGAIN START COMPETING WITH INDUSTRY FOR OUR FACULTY MEMBERS.

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